

Wellness Works

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Clear the Inside Air

Is your home making you sick?

Keeping your home safe begins with a look at the air you breathe. Indoor air pollution can come from:

- Tobacco smoke
- Wood smoke
- Gas-burning appliances and furnaces
- Radon gas
- Mold
- Allergens

All of these air problems can be made worse by poor air circulation, and high heat and humidity. Here are some tips to help prevent health problems:

- If you smoke, quit or smoke outside instead of in your home or car.
- Make sure all of your appliances, furnaces and fireplaces are in good working order and vented correctly.
- To stop mold, keep moisture under control. Use a dehumidifier or air conditioner to keep your house dry with a humidity level between 30 and 60%. You can test the humidity level with a hygrometer.
- Clean up water leaks right away and get the leak fixed.

Learn the facts about Radon

Nearly one in 15 homes in the U.S. is estimated to have raised radon levels. Radon comes from the natural decay of uranium and is found in almost all soils. Radon usually gets into the house from the ground through cracks and holes in the foundation. Radon then gets trapped inside the house. Any home may have a problem. Since radon is a cancer-causing, radioactive gas that you can't see or taste, consider having your home tested. To learn more about testing, visit epa.gov/radon.

Sources: United States Department of Agriculture; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



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Help prevent back injury

If you're bent on maintaining a healthier back, following these common sense work habits can help keep injury away.

- When sitting, keep your upper back and neck comfortably straight with your back firmly against the chair.
- Make sure your chair is right for you. Adjust the height, tilt, armrests and backrest.
- Take a 30 second timeout every 15 minutes or so to stretch, move or relax.
- Try standing up when you answer the phone, to stretch and change positions.
- Limit the time you spend carrying heavy briefcases, purses and bags.

Consider increasing the amount of exercise you get to help improve your physical condition.

Source: Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research

Don't skimp on sleep

You have so much to do and so little time to do it. Naturally, you have to find a way to accomplish it all. Do you steal sleep time, thinking one less hour won't hurt you? Think again!

Cutting back on sleep — even one hour — can make it hard to concentrate and slows your response time. When you slack on sleep, your judgment is impaired. This can result in lower performance at work and an increased risk for dangerous situations like car accidents.

Health problems linked to lack of sleep

Skimping on sleep is never a wise decision. Insufficient sleep has been linked to chronic diseases and conditions including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity and depression. Short-changing sleep also negatively impacts your immune system, mood, alertness and the way you think.

The National Sleep Foundation found that 39% of American adults get less than seven hours of sleep each night — well below the seven to nine hours recommended by sleep experts. The amount of sleep you get is as important as the quality of your sleep, which should be continuous and without interruptions. You need to have continuous sleep so you'll feel refreshed and alert for the day ahead.

Lack of sleep takes its toll

Sleep provides the body and the brain with many benefits. Not sleeping enough has serious side effects. Here are six reasons why you should make sure that you are getting enough sleep:

- 1. Learning and memory** - Sleep helps the brain commit new information to memory. Research shows that people that sleep after learning and doing mentally challenging tasks do better on tests later.
- 2. Metabolism and weight** - Hormones released during sleep affect how the body uses energy. Chronic sleep deprivation may cause weight gain and affect your appetite.



- 3. Safety** - Too little sleep contributes to a greater tendency to fall asleep during the daytime for split seconds, causing falls, mistakes and accidents.
- 4. Mood** - Lack of sleep can make you irritable, impatient, moody, depressed and unable to concentrate.
- 5. Cardiovascular health** - Continued sleep deprivation has been linked to high blood pressure, increased stress hormone levels and irregular heartbeat.
- 6. Disease** - Not getting enough sleep alters your immune system. During sleep your body produces hormones that fight infections and repair cells and tissues. If you aren't sleeping as much as you should, you may be more likely to develop chronic diseases and other medical conditions.

Source: Harvard Medical School; National Institutes of Health